

## Step up to Nutrition and Health

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March is National Nutrition Month®. This annual campaign, sponsored by the American Dietetic Association, reinforces the importance of good nutrition and physical activity as key components of good health.

This year, key messages of the campaign are based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2005 recommendations. The key messages are as follows:

***The food and physical activity choices made today – and everyday – affect your health and how you feel today and in the future.***

Eating a nutritious diet and engaging in regular physical activity may reduce chronic diseases, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers..

Furthermore, poor diet and physical inactivity are the most important factors contributing to the rise in obesity in this country.

***Make smart choices from every food group.***

Eating foods from all major food groups will give you the nutrients needed for good health. Enjoy a wide variety of foods with different flavors, colors, and textures.

Select *whole-grain foods* like whole wheat, brown rice, and oats. These foods form the foundation of a nutritious diet. Enjoy *fruits* and *vegetables* of various colors; they contain phytochemicals - natural substances that protect the body against disease and no cholesterol and are virtually fat-free. Choose nonfat and low-fat foods from the *milk* and *meat* groups most often.

***Get the most nutrition out of your calories***

All foods can be included in a healthful diet; however, controlling how much and how often certain foods are eaten, especially foods high in fat, sugar or sodium such as fried foods and rich desserts, is important.

Maintaining an appropriate weight is essential for good health and quality of life.

Replacing high-calorie foods with fruits and vegetables is an excellent weight loss strategy.

***Find your balance between food and physical activity***

Long-term health can be achieved when good eating habits are combined with regular physical activity. Balance the foods eaten with physical activity over several days. Don't worry about just one meal or day.

Participating in a variety of enjoyable activities such as walking, running, and bicycling makes a regular exercise program easier to maintain. Activities such

as walking to do errands, gardening, and taking the stairs all contribute to the daily exercise quota.

*Play it safe with foods.*

Keep foods safe to eat at all times. Frequent handwashing is essential in achieving this goal. When shopping, preparing, or storing foods, separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods.

Avoid unpasteurized milk and raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing these ingredients, raw or undercooked meat and poultry, unpasteurized juices, and raw sprouts. Infants and young children, pregnant women, older adults, and those with a weakened immune system should also avoid raw or undercooked fish or shellfish. Because these individuals may be at high risk for developing foodborne illness, they should pay extra attention to food safety advice.

Pregnant women, older adults, and those with a weakened immune system should only eat certain deli meats and frankfurters that have been reheated to steaming hot.

Refrigerate perishable foods promptly, defrost foods properly (never at room temperature), and cook foods to a safe internal temperature. To keep foods out of the danger zone (40° F - 140° F), keep cold food cold and hot food hot.

National Nutrition Month is a perfect time to make positive changes in diet and exercise habits. Small changes can make a big difference in overall health.

Be sure to check out the DoD National Nutrition Month® resource packet available at <http://usachppm.apgea.army.mil/nnm> for nutrition and physical activity-related materials and tools designed to help establish and maintain good health. Additional information is available at the American Dietetic Association web site ([www.eatright.org/nnm](http://www.eatright.org/nnm)).

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